

Arthur Locke

Historical Sketch
of North Londonderry, N.H.,
and of the Baptist
Church therein for 100 years

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1799-1899.

BY ARTHUR LOCKE,
PASTOR BAPTIST CHURCH.

HAVERHILL, MASS.,
C. C. MORSE & SON.

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CENTENNIAL SERVICE, SEPT. 27TH, 1899.

NORTH LONDONDERRY BAPTIST CHURCH.

I Samuel, VII: 12. "Ebenezer," Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

We have learned to sing a glad new song in these days of Christian Endeavor Conventions and Holy Convocations. And the song runs thus:—

"Count your many blessings,
Name them one by one,
And it will surprise you
What the Lord hath done."

It is our privilege to have enshrined upon the Rock of our memories, and not upon the Sands of our imaginations, the goodness and mercy and Providential leadings and dealings of our God with us, that in the dark and trying day we may have hope, and in confronting new difficulties or entering on new Battlefields we may inhale new courage and be inspired from the memories of the past to attempt the unattempted and to scale if necessary the seeming impossible.

The Motto rung out by Carey a century ago "Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God," is a motto that should resound in every heart and the living deeds and triumphs of the past should inspire the heart with greater desire and anticipation.

The words of the text was written not only for the generation then in existence but also for us upon whom "The very ends of the World are come."

One of the greatest Battles in the annals of Israel

was fought by Samuel and his co-generals and captains and triumphantly won; of which this is a memorial "Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It was a monument erected to the 'Majesty and might'—the justice and grace of the Living God.

His people had been rebellious; they had neglected His covenant; they had infringed upon His laws; they had turned their backs upon Him for Baalim; or they compromised and rendered Him a partial service; consequently their rightly Lord, the God of their Fathers sold them into serfdom and tutelage or vassalage. They became servants to the Philistines over whom they were appointed to reign. Samuel, the servant of God brings them face to face with their sin; then is contrition, repentance, abandonment of their evil practices and idolatry; and in consequence pardon, reformation, restoration, tithes and true worship follows. Their sacrifices become acceptable; their prayers are answered and forthwith God goes before them into Battle and the results are glorious.

In the memorial of the text Samuel recounts not only the achievements of the present but links all the past, Egypt and its wonders—the Red Sea and its marvels—the Wilderness and its forty years provisions and the Canaan triumphs with the victories of the hour saying "Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Thus to day, upon the same principle, we are invited to take a retrospect of the past. David could reflect with joy upon the marvelous feats and achievements of Israel who, through God slew mighty Kings, "Sihon King of the Amorites" and "Og the King of Bashan." And Paul recall the victories of the faithful "Who, through faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of Lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made

strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the Aliens, etc. Heb. XI: 34, 35.

So as a Church, it is ours to recount the mercies of the past; and remember the Right Hand of the Most High in the records of the Century, peculiar to every church that stands for its existance on the Word of the Living God. The Baptist church of Londonderry had its trials, persecutions, conflicts, struggles and courts of discipline. Schisms and insubordination have intermingled with progress, development and triumphs.

Many a time she has been tossed to and fro, as a frail barque upon a tempestuous ocean. But bravely she has breasted the rage of each successive hurricane and outwitted the elements and outweathered the gale, until to-day, after the struggles and conflicts of a century, she stands a monument of the preserving power and grace of God, with this motto written on her every enterprise, "Ebenezer, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

It is not ours to recount her achievements one by one at this time, nor to enter into detail; but as the records of discipline present some interesting features or characteristics, we will allow a few to pass in review as a sample of the rest.

The first case of discipline came up July 28th, 1802 and adjourned to meet again Sept. 30th, of the same year, at which time the question was solved—by advising "the plaintive to withdraw the complaint." An excellent course to pursue where consistent. Many complaints are trivial and insignificant which cannot be sustained by a particle of honest evidence—purely based upon hear-say or prejudice. Where investigation is necessary, let it be without delay or the plaintive advised to dispatch his complaint for the diadem of Christian Charity which never magnifies seeming discrepancies but encircles the offender with the halo of its own lustre

that forgives 70 times 7.

Another case of discipline came up in 1805. After conversing over the matter "the Brothers agree to be reconciled to one another about past difficulties. This is the right spirit of Sainthood; not to cherish wrong feelings till Doom's Day and then go down in the Doom.

Other cases of discipline follow for absence from the Church, for money matters, for unbecoming language, for dancing, for hard speeches and in one instance the Church "voted to withdraw the Hand of Fellowship for neglecting the Church and conforming to the World."

A healthy course of discipline to adopt for the pleasure loving Christians of these days. A Christian is entitled to pleasure such as God does approve, but He has not authorized His Children to violate His Sabbaths or run excursions or picnics on His Holy days or any other inconsistent amusements. Discipline for the vanities of youth, inconsistent stories and going to soothsayers are included. Then follows a peculiar instance;—"Voted, That certain Sisters should have liberty to free their minds." It is not recorded whether a pandemonium or a doxology ensued, but let us hope for the latter. Parliamentary rules are safer with their preferments before the body and their answers in response, arrayed in appropriate and courteous language without freedom for tirade. The House of God was never intended for a side show.

Oct. 25th, 1823, a Brother was disciplined on account of drinking "too much ardent Spirit." The confession of the defendant is rather interesting;—he acknowledged that "he could not leave off unless he quits entirely." The church recommended him not to drink any ardent spirit, if he cannot drink a little without drinking too much. The church voted to give him time to try himself." There was certainly charity in

this but not the right Kind of charity such as Paul would recommend, he would not touch meat or any thing else while the World stands if it would cause a weak Brother to stumble. Thank God His Church is coming into the clearer light and uncompromising Truth of His Word on these long disputed questions.

Feb. 23rd, 1828, a Sister declared she was not guilty of intemperance "that two spoonfuls of spirits many times does not hurt her." I should think it would.

They voted to postpone the matter; well they might; a problem of such a nature may well be considered a second time. The church drew up a straight draft on Temperance after that with this element in it "That every member of this Church who shall make or use intoxicating drinks shall be subject to the discipline of this Church, if they shall persist in such offence after suitable admonition shall be excluded."

May 29th, 1830, one Brother refused to meet with or walk with the Church unless they tore "the articles of faith to pieces and flung them away and say they were not fit for the dogs." We hope he did not go to the dogs or become allied to those dogs of which Paul wrote about in his letter to the Phillippians; the Concision who would if they could have torn his doctrine all to pieces.

Perhaps some reasons for the vigorous scenes and healthy course of discipline thro' which the church has passed in her history may be because she was favored with an Elijah (G. Chase) between the 40s and 60s as well as in the present days who is both an officer of the church and of the Town, and this has something to do with the vigorous application of the law within our sacred precincts during the past months. Another reason may be, that the Church ordained a Paul in its early history, as its pastor, and to have a Paul presiding over them must have been a constant stimulus. The very

name being an inspiration.

In 1858 the church voted to have the Association meet with them the next year, Sept. 1859, (40 years ago).

October 13th, 1844, the church expressed its disapproval of slavery and in response to a certain question the answer is couched in these words "No, we do not think it right for man to hold property in man." A tree is known by its fruits.

At different periods large numbers were received into fellowship by Baptism, experience and letter. During 1833, 17 were added by Baptism, and 2 by letter, the membership being 70. The membership run up to 142 or 3 at one time. It then comprised members from the Towns of Bedford, Derry, Hudson Derrifield, Goffstown Nottingham, Salem, etc.

April 30th, 1803. Adopted its Articles of Faith, in which, belief in the Triune God is expressed, the Word of God as the rule of Life, the fall of man, Work of Redemption thro' the Atonement, Justification thro' Grace, Regeneration, Resurrection of just and unjust, a Judgment Day appointed, the Ordinances established, "Prayer public, private and secret" as a duty, with other fundamental doctrines of Christianity, scripturally stated perhaps with one exception, that of "Unconditional Election" of which there is no such thing taught in the Holy Scriptures as unconditional election, unconditional predestination or predetermination. The plan of the whole majestic scheme of Redemption is based upon the Sacrificial Work and conformity to the principles involved. The Elect accept the conditions and abide in them.

Nov. 29th, 1828, the church voted to raise sufficient money to build a House for Baptist Worship. It is not stated in the records that it was built that year but from the "Centennial Discourse of the Presbyterian Church

and Society," delivered by Rev. Luther P. Pert, Pastor, July 2nd, 1846, we should say it was erected that year altho' the word "organized" is used and the statement itself a little conflicting which reads thus:—"In 1829 a Baptist Church was organized in the North part of the Town" still occupying a handsome edifice there. This statement evidently refers to the completion of the Church Building which was voted for the year before and not the organization of the church which of course took place in 1799.

May 29th, 1859, 31 years later the church voted to repair and remodel.

Dec. 17th, 1865, the Pastor and delegates were appointed to meet with the Brethren of Salem, N. H. to consider the propriety of reorganizing them as a regular Baptist Church. One of the first members to join that church after this reorganization was from the Baptist Church in Londonderry. Most of the churches in the Association have received accessions from this church during the century including the churches of Manchester and the First Church of Nashua. It is therefore befitting that our Brethren and Sisters from these churches are here to grace this occasion and to give it a royal commencement for the New Century.

During the century one Brother had a heart large enough to leave his entire farm to the church, which is known as the Plummer Fund. Thus his honor is perpetuated in Baptist History. We wish there were those here to-night who would esteem it a privilege to give a generous offering towards the clearance of our debt of \$800. It is possible for us to raise \$500 in this meeting. May our hearts be touched by the Spirit of God.

The new building in which we have met to recount the memories of the past was erected during the pastoral charge of Rev. D. L. Wentworth under whose super-

vision it was carried to completion. The Weather Vane bears the date of 1894. The church became incorporated in 1892, the society giving precedence to the church.

July 5th, 1896, the church voted to call Rev. W. H. Woodall as its pastor, who served the church with much acceptance until the present incumbent assumed the responsibility Sept. 1st, 1897, since which time the membership has increased from 28 to 48. The Sunday School has reached 60 in attendance. The meetings have been well sustained and the work in all departments never brighter than now. It is within the reach of the church to do great things during the present year.

God's hand has been clearly revealed and his sustaining grace manifested during the march of the century, and as a church we can say "Ebenezer, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Let us therefore take courage in the assurance that the triumphs of God's Grace and Spirit in the past is a guarantee of future blessings.

"He who hath helped us hitherto,
Will help us all our journey through,
And daily give us cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise."

The Benefits which God has conferred upon us as a church and people during the past century should inspire us with greater confidence, greater devotion, and greater ambition in the work that lies before us.

That as Samuel could look back upon the past history of his people and recall many instances of God's loving kindness to them; notwithstanding their oft repeated disobedience and guilty departures from Him; and connected the past with the victories of the hour and thus inscribed His Memorial to all generations "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." So let our gratitude abound in hope and take a very optimistic view of

the coming years and "Be careful (or anxious) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Thanksgiving coupled with prayer is the essence of Christian Achievement. It is ours "To perpetuate in grateful hearts the lofty deeds" and Christian Heroism and noble sacrifices of "vanished years." Heroic deeds, sacrifices and struggles not to be measured in the light of to-day but in the light of the disadvantages of the past. The evidence of God's Hand thro' each successive year, in each successive conflict leading on to multiplied triumphs makes room for hope, assurance of victory in the future. Then let us "On to victory grand, Satan and his host defy and Shout for Daniel's Band."

As this Town has raised up Heroes in the past, Captains and Generals to serve in the Battle-fields of Uncle Sam; and among the number the celebrated John Stark whom we were pleased to admire in the works of Coffin before we came to Town, as one of the greatest heroes in the Anglo-French Wars and in the Revolution. Let us pray and labor that God may enable this church to raise up, instruct and send forth Heroes and Heroines to fight "The good fight of Faith" in the Battlefields of Church Militant and that shall be endowed with high honors in the Church Triumphant. May the Lord give us inspiration to-night to put on afresh the whole Armor of God and go forth in the Spirit of that beautiful Hymn:—

I love Thy church O God!
 Her walls before Thee stand,
 Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
 And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
 For her my prayers ascend,
 To her my cares and toils be given,
 Till toils and cares shall end.

One Hundred Years.

Anniversary Celebration at North Londonderry Baptist Church.

We linger on the threshold of another century of years,
 The past is all behind us with its struggles and its fears;
 The record of its achievements and conflicts not a few,
 Are lessons for our profit in the century brought to view.

We would cherish what was God-given in the records of the past,
 And know by His Providential leadings, we shall reach the goal at last
 Though mountains rise before us and the billows roll ever high,
 The sure strong hand of Jehovah is with us ever nigh.

Hitherto, He has been with us and will be to the end,
 Our Rock and Refuge and Helper and ever present friend;
 As in the days of yore, He slew the famous kings,
 So in the days of our history, He has done for us great things.

Notwithstanding misrepresentations and oppositions not a few,
 From the time our church was organized and the little band wholly new,
 Faithfulness to the truth, and to the Lord's command,
 Have characterized this warrior group in their march on every hand.

Its pastors they were noble men, as true as could be found,
 As ever stood on God's altar stairs or did His truth propound:
 They set forth His holy word in language true to all.
 And preached as earnest and sincere as the grand apostle Paul.

They plead with sinners, as those who only can,
 Who know the terrors of the law, proclaimed against sinful men;
 As those whose souls are all on fire with God's most holy truth
 Believing that God's matchless grace could save them all from death.

So on they strove from week to week in labors manifold,
 Till many souls were brought to Christ and saved within the fold;
 Still on they labored and were blest in building up the saints in rest,
 Till called of God to new bequests, to do the work He deemed was best.

And now the century has gone but another lies before,
 Within its struggles and its difficulties and its glories to explore,
 Then up ye warriors of the cross, be brave, be true, be strong,
 And labor with Paul-like steadfastness and overcome all wrong.

Be valiant champions for the truth for which the Saviour bled and died,
 For this said He: "I sanctify myself" that they too may be sanctified,
 Sanctified, made meet and clean to grace His honored name,
 That others may be won to Him, through whom all goodness came.

That thus the little faithful band united long ago,
 To stand for truth and righteousness and to try God's works to do,
 Shall still live on through coming years in living deeds and true
 Through you, who have taken up the work in the century brought to
 view.

The multiplied achievements and the victories of the past,
 Are assurances of His Presence, that He will be with us to the last;
 And the studded Ebenezers that project along the way,
 Are Monumental tokens for every future day.

So with courage even braver, than our fathers ever knew,
 Let us ever seek God's favor and test His grace anew;
 And press on to heights of attainment we never knew before,
 Till God Himself shall say well done, be with me evermore.

ARTHUR LOCKE

Pastor Baptist Church
 North Londonderry, N. H.

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